

Title: **Policies Concerning Behavior and Safety**For revision history see last sheet

1.0 PURPOSE:

Procedures for Unitarian Society of New Haven (USNH) staff and members to address and make safe USNH members, staff and property from those exhibiting disruptive, threatening, overtly sexual or violent behavior.

2.0 BACKGROUND

USNH strives to be an inclusive community affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions, and life experiences. However, concern for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of the individual. To the degree the disruptive behavior compromises the health of our congregation, our actions as people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security.

3.0 DEFINITION OF DISRUPTIVE OR THREATENING BEHAVIOR

This includes but may not be limited to -

3.1 Words or actions that threaten safety of any adult or child.

3.2 Words or actions that disrupt congregational activities.

3.3 Words or actions that diminish the appeal of the congregation to its potential and existing membership.

3.4 Words or actions that threaten property of USNH or members or friends.

4.0 USNH PRINCIPLES

The Unitarian Society of New Haven (hereinafter called the Society or USNH) is a place of safety and integrity for each person's mind, body and spirit. We are a supportive and nurturing faith community, honoring and respecting the rich diversity of those gathered here.

While openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination's purposes and principles, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere where such openness can exist.

When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly, even if this ultimately requires the dismissal or expulsion of the offending person or persons.

5.0 USNH AFFIRMATIONS

We affirm our Unitarian Universalist principles by the policies described herein:

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- 5.1 The inherent worth and dignity of every person.
- 5.2 Justice, equity and compassion in human relations.
- 5.3 Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.
- 5.4 A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
- 5.5 The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.
- 5.6 The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all.
- 5.7 Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

6.0 USNH COVENANT

We seek to affirm our congregational covenant and use it as a guide for engagement around the policies described herein. As a congregation, we covenant together to create and nurture a culture of respect and kindness, and to engage in the spiritual and everyday practice of loving more generously.

To this end we will strive to:

- 6.1 **Be Open** to new ideas, experiences, and change; to create space for all opinions; and to warmly welcome newcomers into our community.
- 6.2 **Value Differences** by welcoming diversity in all its forms; celebrating the unique qualities and gifts of every individual; and by honoring the diversity of our spiritual paths.
- 6.3 **Listen Deeply** and honor others with our full attention, seeking to understand, and assuming good intentions.
- 6.4 **Use Kind Language** speaking with care and consideration; being gentle with one another; and remembering there is power in silence and reflection.
- 6.5 **Speak our Truths** by sharing personal stories that build trust and community; by speaking our truths with courage and encouraging others to do the same, especially in difficult times.
- 6.6 **Work with Conflict** addressing differences with honesty and compassion; requesting support when needed; making and receiving authentic apologies; being willing to forgive.

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6.7 Seek Humor and Joy remembering that these qualities can enrich all that we do; and by holding things lightly when we are able.

7.0 OVERALL RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 The Minister(s). (8.2, 8.3, 8.6, 8.7.4, 8.7.4.3, 9.2, 9.4, 9.5, 9.7)

7.2 The Board. (8.2, 8.3, 8.6, 8.7, 8.7.1, 8.7.3, 8.7.4, 8.7.4.3, 9.2, 9.4, 9.5, 9.7)

7.3 Management Team. (8.2)

7.4 Paid Members of the Society's Administrative or Program Staff. (8.3, 8.4, 8.5)

7.5 Covenantal Relations Committee. (8.7.4.5, 8.7)

7.6 Congregants. (8.1, 8.6)

7.7 Ad Hoc Committee. (8.7, 8.7.1, 8.7.4.3, 8.7.4.5)

7.8 Unitarian Universalist Association. (9.7, 9.9)

7.9 Police/ Law Enforcement. (8.3, 8.6, 9.4, 9.7)

7.10 Director of Lifespan Religious Education. (9.4)

8.0 RESPONDING TO DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR.

8.1 Initial Steps. The Unitarian Society of New Haven invites congregants to be involved in the decisions that affect them. As an initial step in dealing with any disruptive and challenging situation, individuals are encouraged to first attempt to address their concerns directly with the other individual(s) involved.

8.2 Reporting Disruptive Behavior. In the case of an unsatisfactory outcome to a direct attempt at resolving disruptive/intimidating behaviors any person who believes that they have witnessed or experienced disruptive behavior or who has had a disruptive behavior incident reported to them should report it to the minister, a board member, a member of the Management Team or a member of the USNH staff.

8.3 Legal Requirements. If required by law, ordinance, or similar regulation, the senior minister or a designated member of the Society's staff will immediately report the incident to the proper authorities.

8.4 No Retaliation. The Society will not retaliate against anyone who brings forward a complaint. All Society leaders and staff are required to immediately report any knowledge of disruptive behavior, harassment, abuse, or misconduct to the minister(s) or the Board.

8.5 Confidentiality. While the Society cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, the Society will make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality by disclosing the identity of the individuals involved only on a "need-to-know" basis and as necessary to investigate and resolve the complaint.

8.6 Immediate Response. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the minister, if available, and/or the leader of the group involved. This may include asking the offending person(s) to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until such a time as it can safely be resumed. If further assistance is required, the Police Department may be called. Anytime any of these actions are undertaken

without the minister's presence, the minister and the President and Vice-President of the Board of Trustees must be notified. A copy of this policy and a follow-up letter detailing what steps must be taken before returning to the activities involved will be sent by the minister and the Board of Trustees to the offending party or parties.

8.7 Longer Term Response. Situations not requiring an immediate response will be referred to the Board of Trustees which, depending on the level of severity, may choose to refer to the Covenantal Relations Committee (CRC) or appoint an ad hoc committee to respond to the situation in question. The Board will determine if the behavior/situation falls outside the bounds of this policy i.e. does not meet the criteria established above for disruptive behavior. If this is the case, the Board will refer to the CRC and recommend following procedures outlined in Policy of Covenantal Relations. If the behavior does meet the criteria for disruptive behavior, the Board or an ad hoc committee will respond by first providing a copy of this policy to the individual whose behavior is considered disruptive. Then the Board or its designates will observe the following in terms of their own judgment:

8.7.1 Responder. The Board or a designated ad hoc committee will respond to problems as they arise.

8.7.2 No Stereotyping. Persons identified as displaying disruptive behavior will be engaged as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.

8.7.3 Determining the Level of Response. The Board or its designates will collect all necessary information and will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis. The following facts will be considered:

8.7.3.1 Danger. Is the individual the source of a threat to persons or property? If yes, in what setting?

8.7.3.2 Disruption. Is there a pattern of interference with or disruption of Society activities? If yes, in what setting?

8.7.3.3 Causes. Why is the disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the Society? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition or mental illness?

8.7.3.4 History. What has been the frequency and degree of disruption in the past?

8.7.3.5 Impact. Is there a pattern of prospective or existing members leaving the congregation as a result of the disruptive behavior?

8.7.3.6 Probability of Change. How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?

8.7.4 Levels of Response.

8.7.4.1 Level One – The Board or its designates shall inform the minister of the problem and the minister and a member of the Board shall meet with the individual identified as displaying disruptive behavior to communicate the concern and listen to the individual's point of view. Strategies for remaining in relationship with the Society are established and outlined in written form.

8.7.4.2 Level Two – The individual identified as displaying disruptive behavior is excluded from the Society and/or specific society activities for a limited period of time, with reasons and the conditions of return made clear and outlined in written form.

8.7.4.3 Level Three – The individual identified as displaying disruptive behavior shall be permanently excluded from the USNH premises and all USNH activities. Before this is carried out, any ad hoc committee acting on behalf of the Board of Trustees will consult with the Board and the minister. If it is decided that expulsion will take place, a letter will be sent by the Board and the minister, explaining the expulsion and the individual's rights and possible recourse including what options could be pursued for reinstatement.

8.7.4.4 Level Three Appeal - Any action taken under Level Three may be appealed, in writing, to the Board of Trustees within thirty days to six months of the letter of notification. The request must contain information concerning the rationale for the reinstatement:

8.7.4.4.1 A statement of understanding of the reasons for which they were removed from membership and

8.7.4.4.2 An explanation in detail how circumstances and conditions have changed, such that a reinstatement would be justified.

8.7.4.5 Level Three Ad Hoc Appeal Committee.

An ad hoc appeal committee shall be formed by the Board of Trustees in the event that the action taken under Level Three is appealed. The appeal committee shall be composed of two members of the Board of Trustees, one member of the Management Team, one member of the Covenantal Relations Committee (CRC), one member selected by the Covenantal Relations Committee who is not a member of the CRC nor a member of the Board of Trustees, and a sixth Society member being an active member of the Society, chosen by the removed person. In a case where the individual does not have a member to propose, the sixth member would be selected by the other five members of this appeal committee. The majority decision of the appeal committee shall be adhered to for a year, after which a second appeal could be considered.

9.0 RESPONDING TO SEXUAL OR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR

9.1 Applicability. This policy applies to a current member/friend or newcomer who is accused or has been convicted of a sexual or other violent offense. It seeks to balance principles that are sometimes in tension but stem from our deepest conviction that this congregation is a space of radical hospitality and fundamental respect for the worth and dignity of every individual, on the one hand, with our deep commitment to ensuring that it is a safe space, in which the actions of participants do not jeopardize the welfare of others. We start with the assumption that persons entering the space and programs of USNH will conduct themselves with integrity and deep respect for all who are here; violations of this standard will be addressed as follows.

9.2 Initial Steps. When the minister becomes aware of an individual accused or convicted of sexual or violent offense, s/he will meet with the individual and a member of the Board of Trustees to explore with the individual the nature of the accusation or conviction and assess its potential impact on the congregation.

9.3 Issues Considered. Among the issues to be considered will be the nature of the accusation/conviction, when it occurred, whether it appears to be a single episode or part of a pattern, its current legal status (e.g. accusation only; conviction with parole/probation completed; conviction and current parole/probation), the likelihood of the behavior occurring within the society or its programs, and its potential to cause anxiety to or threaten the welfare of congregants, particularly children.

9.4 Obtaining Information. The minister may seek substantiating information from public records and, with the individual's permission, from a parole/probation officer or other person in a position to evaluate the likelihood of risk to the congregation of the individual's participation. For all cases involving accusations or convictions of sexual offenses, the minister will seek substantiating information from public records and report the case to the Board of Trustees and, if appropriate, the Director of Lifespan Religious Education.

9.5 Board Guidance. The minister will also consult with the Board of Trustees for guidance on appropriate limitations, if any, in the individual's participation in USNH services or programs. The minister may also request that members of the Board meet with the individual for an independent assessment.

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9.6 Required Agreement. When warranted by behavior or evidence of the likelihood of behavior that jeopardizes the wellbeing of community members, the individual will be asked to sign an agreement stipulating limitations to their access to specific programs, spaces, activities of the society. Such limitations will be developed with due consideration for the specific circumstances of individual cases and may include some or all of the provisions included in **Appendix 1. Limited Access Agreement**. The details of the Limited Access Agreement will be developed in consultation with the Board of Trustees.

9.7 Refusal to Sign Agreement. If the individual refuses to sign a Limited Access Agreement they will be denied the opportunity to participate in congregational activities. If the individual violates the terms of the Agreement, they will be asked to leave the society premises/program by a member of the Board of Trustees or the minister. If they refuse, the police will be called for assistance.

9.8 Reasons to deny access to USNH.

9.8.1 Refusal to allow the minister to contact the current parole/probation officer

9.8.2 Refusal to sign and abide by the Limited Access Agreement

9.8.3 Failure to uphold any one of the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement

9.8.4 Report by a treatment provider that the individual is at too high risk for recidivism.

9.9 Case for UUA Guidance.

If the minister or another staff member is accused or indicted for a sexual or other violent offense, the President of the Board of Trustees will contact the Director for Congregational Services at the UUA and/or the New England Regional Lead.

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APPENDIX 1 (2 sheets)

LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT

CONFIDENTIAL

The Unitarian Society of New Haven (USNH) affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation, as well as one to one contact with adult congregants. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership, but your participation will be limited to ensure the congregation's safety and to assure that you will not be subject to undue accusations.

The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk of an incident or accusation.

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, fellowship hour, committee meetings, adult education, all adult social events, and well-supervised intergenerational events. You are to avoid all contact with children on the USNH premises or congregation-sponsored events and unsupervised contact with adult congregants. This agreement requires that you honor the following boundaries:

- Do not talk with the children and youth.
- If a child in the congregation approaches you either at USNH or in the wider community, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the encounter.
- Do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone, or participate in events for children and youth including religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
- Do not enter the religious education rooms of the building.
- Avoid being in the buildings unsupervised.
- Avoid being alone with another congregant in any part of the buildings.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances to assure the congregation's safety and well-being:

- Minister
- Director of Lifespan Religious Education
- Board of Trustees

I accept that one of the following people must be in my presence at all times when I am in the society buildings or at a USNH event:

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I have reviewed this agreement and will abide by its provisions. I understand that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future USNH functions and property.

I understand that this agreement will be reviewed as the Board of Trustees determines and will remain in place for an indefinite period.

Signature

Date

Witness

Date

Minister

Date

Director of Lifespan Religious Education

Date

Board Chair

Date

(This template may be adjusted according to individual circumstance)

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REVISION HISTORY

Rev	By	Date	Changes Made
1	Rev. Megan	13 June 2018	Original document ready.
2	Jeremy Hill	14 June 2018	Draft transcription to format.
3	Jeremy Hill	15 June 2018	Line spacing normalized.
A	Rev. Megan Management Team	19 Feb 2019	Changed name Of PCRR to CRC. Changed to non-binary language. Edits. Approved initial release.